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## MIAMI BEACH

### Beach forum explains safety tips for places of worship

Posted on Tue, May. 20, 2008    email   print   reprint   AIM   del.icio.us   Digg

BY TANIA VALDEMORO  
tvaldemoro@MiamiHerald.com

Places of worship should create a security plan, have their members practice and update that plan and know who to call when they need help from police or firefighters.

That's the message from Andrew Rosenkranz, the Anti-Defamation League's regional director in Florida, who spoke Monday night at a security forum at Miami Beach's Nautilus Middle School.

Miami Beach Mayor Matti Herrera Bower invited him to discuss security at religious places of worship after a series of suspicious crimes desecrated at least two synagogues in South Florida last month, including the Chabad Shul in Miami Beach, which burned down. "If you take away anything from tonight, you should establish a culture of security at your institution and get to know your local law enforcement," Rosenkranz said.

Rabbi Zev Katz, who heads the Chabad Shul, agreed. "I was small-minded and never thought this would happen to me," said Katz, who did not attend the meeting because of scheduling conflicts.

Law enforcement agencies are investigating a fire at the Chabad Shul as well as vandalism at the Chabad of Parkland in Broward County and at the Martin Downs Country Club in Martin County.

Last week, the Miami Beach Fire Department said that two October fires at the Miami Beach Community Kollel were "incendiary," but declined to call them "arson."

The decision has upset Rabbi Yaccov Gross, who heads the Kollel.

"They told me after the fires that for sure it was arson. Now, they say it isn't. I don't know what's going on," Gross said.

The community has been meeting at Temple Beth Israel, next door to the Kollel, while they continue to rebuild their synagogue.

The Kollel did not have a security plan in place before the fire, but now, people want to install security cameras once they finish fixing up the damaged building, Gross said.

As for Katz, he said a member of the synagogue now stands outside the door of their makeshift temple to screen people who want to enter the synagogue.

Both rabbis said they are interested in attending a half-day security workshop on May 28 sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League and the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. The groups will invite experts from the federal Department of Homeland Security, the Miami Police Department and private industry to advise people on how to keep their Jewish institutions safe.

"It sounds like a good idea," Katz said.

For more information, call the Jewish Community Relations Council at 305-576-4000, ext. 486, or e-mail [communityrelations@gmjf.org](mailto:communityrelations@gmjf.org).

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